



RSVP Connections

Connecting Senior Volunteers with Community Needs
September 2003

Dear RSVP Volunteers,

9-11-2001. Two years have passed since our country watched the terrible and terrifying events that happened on that date. Those events forever affected our lives and our perspectives. Words took on new meaning –hero, freedom, safety and security.

Like many Americans, I attended a service after that tragic day, to remember the victims and to pray for our country. Someone sang “America the Beautiful”. The words of the song reverberated with the sadness and loss that we all felt, yet at the same time reminded us about our nation’s enduring beauty, strength, and spirit. Our country, beautiful from sea to shining sea, founded by pilgrims in search of freedom, built by patriots who dreamed of a new way of government, and defended by heroes who “more than self their country loved”.

Today’s pilgrims are the refugees from war-torn or oppressive regimes, who continue to come to America in search of freedom and opportunity for themselves and their families. Today’s patriots are the men and women who have served in the armed forces to protect our country and defend freedom. Today’s heroes are the everyday citizens from all walks of life who help neighbors and strangers to cope with adversity, whether it is a natural disaster, a power outage, or a terrorist attack.

This newsletter will spotlight volunteer opportunities at three agencies serving today’s pilgrims, patriots, and heroes. Journey’s End assists refugees to find housing, work, and a new life in this country. The Veteran’s Administration provides medical and social services for those who have served in the armed forces. Citizens Corps is a new federal initiative that will help to coordinate volunteer activities to make our communities better prepared to respond to any emergency.

Thank you to each RSVP volunteer, for your time and talent given in service to our communities and our nation!

Patricia Dowling
RSVP Director

Volunteer Opportunities are always listed on the Department’s website through www.erie.gov/depts/seniorservices or by calling us at **858-7548**. Are there any areas of interest, or any non-profit agencies, that you think should be added to the RSVP Opportunities List? **Let us know your thoughts.** Call, write, or e-mail at dowlingp@erie.gov.

Inside this issue...Spotlight on Veterans Administration, Citizen Corps, After-School Program, Hamburg Adult Daycare, Journey’s End, and **much, much more...**

THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION VOLUNTARY SERVICE PROGRAM: SERVING OUR NATION'S HEROES

Since 1950, when the Veterans Administration opened the hospital on Bailey Avenue in Buffalo, volunteers have played an important role throughout the hospital. Volunteers supplement staff and resources in all areas of patient care and support in order to serve our nation's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion. The Veterans Administration considers volunteers to be its most valuable resource. In fact, the Veterans Administration Voluntary Service Program operates the largest volunteer program in the Federal Government.

The Buffalo VA facility provides "inpatient care" for approximately 150 veterans per day. In Fiscal Year 2002 there were 353,014 outpatient visits involving 42,610 individual veterans. The 774 volunteers who help to serve these veterans gave 165,528 hours of service in 2002. Many volunteers are veterans themselves or wives of veterans. Mark Francis, Director of Voluntary Services at both the Buffalo and Batavia VA facilities, noted that the work done by these volunteers is especially significant to them because of the common bond that they share with the patients. This bond may account for the VA volunteers' extraordinary commitment in terms of hours of service per week, and years of service.



More than just hot coffee, RSVP volunteer Caroline Hamilton serves up warm hospitality at the VA.

At the VA volunteer recognition held last May, volunteers were recognized for thousands of hours they have contributed to the facility. RSVP volunteers Rocco Porcellio and the late Raymond Lodyga each received the VA Top Award for giving 27,500 hours of service. Another RSVP volunteer, Frank McIlvenna, goes to the VA each Wednesday to serve coffee to his fellow veterans. This World War II veteran, who is affectionately known as "The Bartender", celebrated his 90th birthday in January.



Volunteers at the VA facility in Buffalo fill many different positions in their assistance with clerical needs in the admissions area, mailroom, and primary care outpatient clinics; escorting wheelchair patients to and from their clinical appointments; visiting patients who otherwise receive few or no visitors, and assisting the patients with correspondence, reading, etc. Many of the veterans' service organizations provide the recreational activities in the evenings and/or weekends, such as

bingo parties, Monte Carlos or hot dog roasts on the patio.

The VA hospital currently is most in need of volunteer drivers in the Disabled American Veteran (DAV) Transportation Network. Many of the veterans are in need of transportation to the hospital for their medical appointments. Since 1987 the DAV and the VA Voluntary Service Program have staffed and funded a nationwide volunteer-based transportation network. Donations for the vans come to the DAV through businesses and service organizations such as the American Legion, AM-VETS, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Auxiliaries, and others. The DAV recently dedicated 4 new vans for the VA Buffalo facility, increasing the total fleet to 12 vans.



I recently interviewed RSVP volunteers, George and Gerri Kohlbrenner, during their busy shifts at the VA Hospital. Two days per week, this husband and wife team starts their day at the VA at 6:00 AM. George drives the DAV van, and Gerri serves as a Dispatcher for the vans. George started as a volunteer at the VA approximately 25 years ago, and Gerri followed a few years later. Both have a strong commitment to the VA because George, a World War II Army veteran, was one of the hospital's first surgical patients. George's first volunteer service was providing support to other patients, as well as assisting with clerical needs on the Cardiac Unit. George and Gerri enjoy their work with the DAV van because it allows them to get to know many of the patients by name. George also drove the van for the VA's "Stand Down", a day on which the VA brings its full range of medical and social services to many homeless and low-income veterans.

George and Gerri are involved in a variety of volunteer services, but both agree that the VA is their first love. George summed it up in this way: "I believe in the DAV. I believe in my fellow veterans."

RSVP tries to remove barriers between individuals wishing to volunteer and community agencies where volunteers are needed. RSVP supports volunteerism in a number of ways including:

- Providing van transportation for those unable to reach a volunteer site by other means;
- Mileage or bus fare reimbursement to and from the volunteer site, to defray any costs of volunteering that might otherwise present a financial hardship.

While RSVP offers the reimbursement benefit so that no one is prevented from volunteering because of expense, the reimbursement amounts to approximately \$12,000 per quarter. If you are in a position enabling you to do so, please consider not claiming mileage reimbursement (donating the gas as well as your time and talents). The cost savings to the RSVP program will help to ensure that this benefit can be extended to those who need it most. You may be able to claim the mileage on your tax return. Consult your tax advisor.

JOURNEY'S END REFUGEE SERVICES

No need to travel! Meet people from different countries and cultures without leaving town!

Journey's End Refugee Services (JERS) is the local affiliate of two national voluntary agencies - Church World Service and Episcopal Migration Ministries- that work with the State Department to resettle refugees in the Buffalo area.

Newcomers arrive after having been designated as a refugee by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, undergone extensive investigation by government agencies and selected by the State Department as good candidates for resettlement in the US.

'It takes a village to raise a child' is an African saying. Journey's End has found that this adage applies well to the process of resettling refugees. JERS relies on community volunteers to effectively assist newcomers to adjust to their new community. Contact with American citizens helps provide support while newcomers learn about living in Buffalo and America. Refugees arrive in Buffalo with virtually the clothes on their back! JERS works with volunteers to find and prepare housing (usually on Buffalo's West Side), arrange medical assessments, apply for Social Security cards, emergency food stamps, medical benefits, arrange for medical and educational assessments, and enroll clients in English classes.

Elaine Smyth Bogumil, the Volunteer Coordinator at JERS, matches volunteers' interests, talents and capabilities with the needs of the various programs such as:

- **English Language tutoring** at various locations and times including a Wednesday evening ESL drop in center to help working clients improve their skills in English.
- **Employment programs** encourage early employment and self-sufficiency/independence. Since all employable adults are required to be working full time four months after arrival, volunteers can assist with job applications, resume writing, application for NY State ID/ driver's permit, transportation to interviews and/or first day on job. Those who are knowledgeable of the transit system can teach bus routes to newcomers. Any leads for entry-level jobs are welcome.
- **Mentoring** of new or expectant mothers in an unfamiliar and complex healthcare system is always needed.
- **WNY CITIZEN EXPRESS** – Trained volunteers assist with naturalization applications, help with photos, or tutor for the citizenship test/interview

Other opportunities for involvement either on a regular or occasional basis:

- Linguistic abilities in Spanish, French, Arabic, and more can be utilized
- Organize pickups or donations of household donations, or assemble goods for new arrivals
- Drive the truck (no heavy lifting required) for furniture pickup/delivery
- Apartment set up; shopping for or with refugees
- Assist in the office with telephone reception, data entry, etc.
- Help plan and organize special outings or events for refugees or volunteers
- Community outreach through the JERS Speaker's Bureau, newsletter and mailings
- Fundraising activities or work on other committees

For more information about volunteering at Journey's End, call the RSVP office at 858-7548.



CITIZEN CORPS—ORGANIZING NOW

After September 11, 2001, America witnessed a wellspring of selflessness and heroism. People in every corner of the country asked, “What can I do?” and “How can I help?” Citizen Corps was created by President George W. Bush to help all Americans answer these questions through public education and outreach, training and volunteer service. It provides opportunities for people to participate in a range of measures to make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from the threats of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds.

The first step in developing a Citizen Corps is to establish a Citizen Corps Council. This Council may be made up of first responders and emergency management staff, elected officials, business leaders, school system representatives, transportation system representatives, and service agency staff. The Citizen Corps Council helps to drive local citizen participation by developing community action plans, assessing possible threats, and identifying local resources. The Council relies on trained “Leadership Volunteers” who assist with the work of recruiting, placing, and scheduling volunteers for disaster preparedness roles.

Citizen Corps will work together with another safety and preparedness initiative, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. The CERT course trains people to be better prepared to respond to various emergency situations in their communities. It also increases their ability

to safely help themselves, their families, and their neighbors. The CERT course involved 20 plus hours of training, delivered by a team of first responders who have the requisite knowledge and skills to instruct the course.

In New York State, American Red Cross chapters are partnering with several government and volunteer agencies, including RSVP, to support the creation of Citizen Corps Councils across the state. The New York program’s goal is to train and mobilize 15,000 volunteers—primarily seniors—over a three-year period.



An initial training about Citizen Corps was held in July at the American Red Cross. Beau Alexander, the Regional Coordinator responsible for assisting the start-up of Citizen Corps Councils, met with representatives from a number of local agencies, including RSVP. Pat Dowling, RSVP Project Director, and two RSVP volunteers, Dennis Shine and Ann Seitz, attended. This group will continue to meet over the next months to develop the mission and structure for a local Citizen Corps Council. The Council then will develop a plan to identify volunteer needs, and to recruit and train volunteers for various roles in disaster preparedness.

RSVP will be one of the primary vehicles for recruiting volunteers for the Citizen Corps. If you are interested in playing a role in the Citizen Corps, please contact the RSVP office at 858-7548.

Do you have questions about Medicare? Insurance? Benefits?
Curious about housing options such as assisted living vs. nursing homes?
Need help getting to doctors appointments or to the grocery store?
Wonder whether you qualify for tax rebates or utility reductions?
Do you need a speaker to address your community group or club?

Erie County Department of Senior Services can help—Call 858-8526.

Information about many programs and services are available on the web at
www.erie.gov/depts/seniorservices



WHAT ARE YOU DOING AFTER SCHOOL?

Millions of American children spend afternoons at home alone. At best, they spend their time watching television or playing video games. At worst, they spend time getting into dangerous situations. In afterschool programs, these children develop their interests and build upon the education they receive during class time with extra learning activities. A good afterschool program offers children the chance to have fun and feel comforted, and to be excited by learning. Research shows that afterschool programs have many benefits for the children who participate as well as for the larger community.

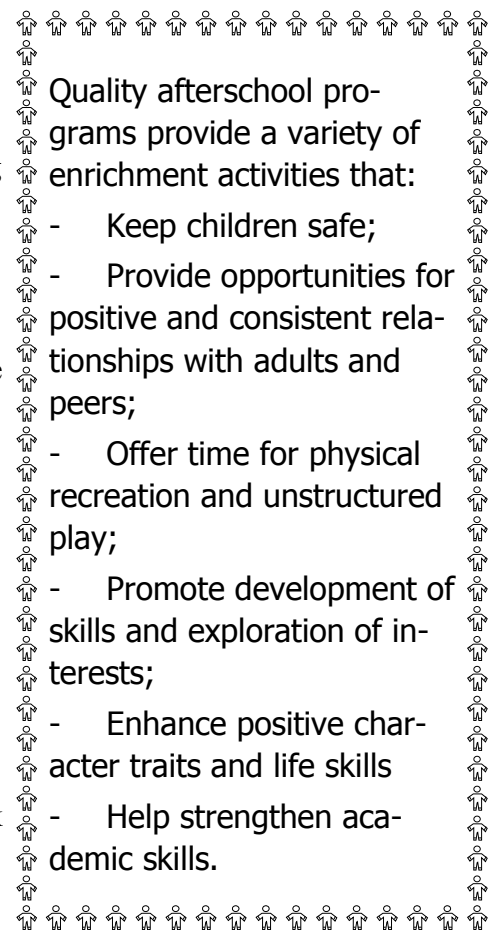
At an afterschool program, volunteers can make an impact on the way that children spend their out-of-school time and the quality of the programs they attend. Volunteers can serve as tutors, mentors, and activity leaders. Volunteers can lead special interest clubs based on their hobbies and former professions. If you play chess, you can teach a group of youngsters the basic chess moves and strategy, and organize a small tournament. If you sew, you can teach children some basic sewing skills, and then help them to work together to make a simple quilt. Whatever your passion -- reading, science, baking, arts and crafts, music, or some other pursuit—you can share it with the children in our community.

If you are age 55 or over, you can volunteer at an afterschool program through the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). RSVP is sponsored locally by the Erie County Dept. of Senior Services. Throughout the County, 1150 RSVP volunteers are engaged in service that impacts that community and, at the same time, enriches their lives. The only requirement to join RSVP is that a person is age 55 or older. RSVP provides volunteers with supplemental accident and liability insurance, travel reimbursement, and an annual recognition luncheon. RSVP recently added two afterschool programs to the list of RSVP community partners:

Mount Olive Development Corporation provides a quality afterschool program named the G.O.L.D. (Growth Opportunity Learning & Development) Program for children in grades K-8. The program is located in the modern, bright Fellowship Hall of the Mt. Olive Baptist Church near Dele-



van and Grider, and runs during the school year on Monday- Friday, 2:30pm – 6:30pm. Children spend time doing homework in small groups supervised by a teacher, then have a nutritious snack prepared in the kitchen of the church. After snack, the children have time for recreation such as games, arts and crafts, or other activities. **Volunteers are needed** to assist children one-on-one with homework, and to help out with the recreational activities. Volunteers who enjoy cooking are needed to prepare the children's snack.



The **Seneca Babcock Community Center**, located at 1168 Seneca Street near Babcock Street, has served the children of the area for nearly three decades. The afterschool program starts at 3:30 pm with homework help and snack. Help is needed with reading skills and in junior high subjects such as math and science. Children work with volunteer tutors in groups or individually. The youth recreation program includes an Internet accessed computer room, a weight room, a recreation room and ceramic classes. Children under age 10 can stay at the Center until 8 pm, and older children can stay until 9 pm. This fall, the Center will add a soundproof music lesson room a dance/exercise studio, and two additional classrooms. There are many opportunities to share your talents and skills with children of all ages.

To volunteer your help at these programs or other school settings, call RSVP at 858-7548.

RSVP – MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HAMBURG

The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is one of the largest volunteer efforts in the United States. RSVP's mission is to inspire and coordinate the service of persons 55 and older in volunteer activity that impacts the community and provides a high quality experience that will enrich their lives. RSVP, which is sponsored locally by the Erie County Dept. of Senior Services (858-7548), is seeking volunteers for the following service opportunities in Hamburg:

The Town of Hamburg's Adult Day Services program is seeking caring and compassionate volunteers to share part of the day with the approximately 30 adults who attend the Center on a daily basis. The Adult Day Services program is located in the former train station at 353 Pleasant Avenue in Hamburg. The station is now a very bright and home-like place where participants enjoy trivia, exercise programs, a game of Uno, or a sing-a-long with the staff. At least once per week, the participants take the vans to a fun local destination such as the Butterfly Conservatory, a restaurant, or even the casino! The Adult Day Services program provides stimulation and socialization for adults who have physical impairments or dementia.

At the same time, the program provides a much-needed break for the family caregiver, so that he or she can go shopping, visit a friend, or take a nap. Volunteers are needed to help out on field trips, lead games and sing-a-longs, or just have a one-on-one conversation reminiscing about the past and discussing the present.



Volunteers may comfort a participant who is confused or anxious because the family caregiver is not present, or walk with someone who is wandering. Volunteering at the Adult Day Program is an opportunity for a special person with patience, understanding, and a sense of humor. In the words of a volunteer, "It makes me feel good to know that I am helping the participants relax and have a good time. Since volunteering, I've learned how to be sensitive to their needs. I love to see them laugh."



ANNOUNCING THE RSVP ADVISORY COUNCIL

The RSVP Advisory Council is up and running! Fifteen individuals accepted the invitation to join the Council and bring a wonderful array of talents and experiences:

Gail Chapman – ECMC, Director of Volunteer Training & Development

Raymond Davis – RSVP Volunteer, Como Park Elementary School

Maureen DeSabio – Amherst Senior Center, Volunteer Director

Marcie Dudek – Cheektowaga Central Schools, Volunteer Coordinator

Victoria Ford – Family Care Coordinator, Mt. Olive Development Corporation

Bob Flumerfeldt – United Way Volunteer Center (Retired)

Richard Gehring – Executive Director, Meals on Wheels of Buffalo & Erie County

Nicholas George – RSVP Volunteer, Union East Elementary

Naomi Gworek – RSVP Volunteer, Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park

Peg Huber – RSVP Volunteer, Mercy Hospital of Buffalo

Michael Petrinc – RSVP Volunteer, Buffalo & Erie County Zoological Gardens

Gerry Rumsey – RSVP Volunteer, Tiffit Nature Preserve

Gloria Soto – Executive Director, Hispanics United

Herbert Weiss – RSVP Volunteer, Erie Co. Senior Services Advisory Board

Maggie Wright – U.B. Medical School (Retired)

One of the primary tasks of the Advisory Council is to strengthen the partnership between the community and the RSVP project. The Council will help to assess community needs, and identify new community settings for RSVP volunteers to serve. The Council will suggest ways that the project can gain increased visibility and recognition in the community. This will facilitate recruitment of new volunteers, development of additional resources, and linkages with other programs. The Council will assess the project's accomplishments and impact on the community. Finally, the Council will assist the project staff to plan and implement Tribute day and other ways to recognize the accomplishments of the RSVP volunteers.

The RSVP staff is looking forward to working with the Council to bring out the best in RSVP!

RSVP of Erie County
Dept. of Senior Services
95 Franklin St., Room 1381
Buffalo, NY 14202

WELCOME NEW RSVP VOLUNTEERS—WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!!

JUNE, 2003

ARENDT, RICHARD M.	BUFFALO NAVAL & SERVICEMANS PARK
BORNGRABER, DONNA M.	RURAL TRANSIT - EVANS
CONNORS, MARYANN	ROSWELL
DALGLEISH, DOUGLAS	MILLARD-GATES
DRISCOLL, EDNA T.	ROSWELL
DROMERHAUSER, ROBERT J.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
FREEMAN, MELVIN F.	ROSWEL
GALLEY, JOSEPH E.	ROSWELL
GARTNER, TONI	ROSWELL
GINTER, BERNADINE M.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
HOESEL, RICHARD M.	B&EC MOW
HOY, JOHN D.	KENMORE MERCY
HUBERT, BERTHA	OFFICE FOR THE DISABLED
KAYLOR, ROBERT E.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
KELMER, WILLIAM S.	RURAL TRANSIT - ORCHARD PARK
KERN, JOHN L.	ROSWELL
KIESER, WILLIAM N.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
LeCLAIR, CHRISTINE M.	LUPUS ALLIANCE
LEE, ARTHUR R.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
LEININGER, MID L.	ROSWELL
MAJEWSKI, JESS	B&EC NAVAL PARK
MALONEY, BARBARA	ROSWELL
MALONEY, TIMOTHY A.	ROSWELL
MARZULLO, JIM A.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
MARZULLO, SANTO A.	ROSWELL
MILLER, MARILY KAY	ST VINCENT de PAUL
OBERLE, PAUL L.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
RUNFOLA, ETHNEA C.	ROSWELL
SCHUGARDT, DOROTHY M.	ROSWELL
SCHUGARDT, WILLIAM C.	ROSWELL
SCHWAB, LYLE P.	B&EC NAVAL PARK
SZCZEPANIEC, RICHARD	B&EC NAVAL PARK
WALLACE, JOHN C.	ROSWELL
WEISBECK, JOHANNA D.	ROSWELL
WISHNOFF, SYLVIA	ROSWELL

JULY, 2003

DURHAM, CEYLON J.
FISCHER, MARIE E.
HINEMAN, RICHARD J.
KITSON, RUTH M.
LEARY, ELSIE M.
LEVY, BRIAN R.
REED, MARY E.

OPERATION GOOD NEIGHBOR
ROSWELL
VA
HOSPICE
ROSWELL
ERIE COUNTY HOME
SALEM CONCORD NUTR

AUGUST, 2003

CHMELKO, EILEEN A.
CLARE, JUDITH N.
COHEN, BETTY
CONSTANTINO, ALFRED
DALGLEISH, DOUGLAS
DeMARIE, MARY ELLEN
DOAN, TERESA M.
FERACI, MARLENE
GACEK, ROBERT S.
GILBERT, STELLA
GORSKI, IRENE F.
HAAS, PEARL
HALL, JANICE L.
HICKEY, CLARA A.
KERTZIE, EVELYN J.
KLIN, CORINNE A.
OLIVER, MADELINE F.
PARSONS, MARY L.
REEVES, JUDITH
ROBERT, WILLIAM B.
SCHAMES, BETTY
SCHMITT, MELINDA
SCHULER, PAUL L.
SEITZ, IRENE M.
SIERGIEJ, EILEEN B.
SMITH, PATRICIA M.
TOLNAY, DOLORES J.
WETTLAUFR, TRUDY

OPERATION GOOD NEIGHBOR
ROSWELL
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
MILLARD GATES
TOWN OF EVANS NUTR
TIFFT NATURE PRESERVE
TOWN OF EVANS NUTR
B&EC MEALS ON WHEELS
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE
WEST SENECA SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
ROSWELL
KENSINGTON-BAILEY HOUSING SERVICE
OPERATION GOOD NEIGHBOR
TOWN OF EVANS NUTR
RESPONSE TO LOVE
BUFFALO ZOO
RURAL TRANSIT - ORCHARD PARK
TOWN OF EVANS NUTR
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER
AMHERST SENIOR CENTER